

ECEC Guide to the Annual Federal Budget Process

For more information about the budget details and action in Congress this year, please visit www.ececonsortium.org

Funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant is a mix of what is known as "mandatory" and "discretionary" money. Different committees in Congress work on these different types of funding.

Administration's Budget Proposal

The President's budget proposal is the start of the annual federal funding process. It includes the President's priorities, so it is very important, but it is not a law and it is just the beginning of a longer process. It is essentially a nonbinding request to Congress.

Congressional Budget Resolution

First, the House and Senate Budget Committees create a Budget Resolution. This is a blueprint which sets revenue and spending targets. Budget Resolutions do not typically mention specific programs or specific dollar amounts. The House and Senate vote on this measure, but a signature from the President is not required.

House and Senate Appropriations Committee Action for "Discretionary" Funding

The Appropriations Committees in Congress have subcommittees that determine individual program funding. There are 12 Subcommittees that cover all of the federal departments. The House and Senate Subcommittees on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education work on funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start.

The Subcommittees hold hearings to gather information about how funds are used and what funds are needed. The Subcommittee then drafts, marks up, negotiates and votes on their individual bills. These bills are then brought to the full Appropriations Committee for votes.

House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committee Action for "Mandatory" Funding and For Tax/Revenue Proposals

The federal budget also includes proposals for "entitlement" programs (a portion of CCDBG dollars are considered in this way), as well as tax and revenue proposals (like credits and deductions, including the Dependent Care Tax Credit). The House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee have jurisdiction over the legislation for these kinds of proposals.

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Federal Funding Timeline

February: Administration releases budget proposal

April 15: Congressional Budget Resolutions completed

Spring: Appropriations committees hold hearings

Summer: Appropriations committees vote

September 30: deadline to complete work for the next fiscal year, or deadline to pass an extension (a Continuing Resolution)

October 1: first day of the federal fiscal year

House and Senate Approval of Committee Bills

After clearing the Appropriations Committees, each bill then moves to the House and Senate floors for a vote. Then, like with any piece of legislation, a Conference Committee is convened with members from both Committees to work out the differences and send one bill to the President for signature. This is all supposed to be completed in time for the start of the fiscal year on October 1.

What if This Work Isn't Completed By September 30?

The Continuing Resolution

If Congress has not completed work on all appropriations bills by the end of the fiscal year, a Continuing Resolution (CR) must be passed to continue funding for federal programs (usually at current/existing funding levels) until Congress can finish their work. Congress can choose any new date as the new deadline.

The Omnibus Appropriations Bill

If individual bills cannot be completed, even after a CR, Congress can create an omnibus bill that rolls some or all of the individual appropriations bills into one bill for debate and vote on the House and Senate floor.

For the latest on the budget process for this year, please visit

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